



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

19th District News

Spring 2000



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Dear Friends:

We're pleased to share a report on several major discussions in the Legislature.

This edition of 19th District News reviews key provisions in the House budget proposal, of course, and we also have additional items to cover. **One big challenge is to update the budget in ways that maintain our commitment to schools, to public health and safety, and to our responsibilities in the area of transportation.** Although the initiative is being challenged in court, we have a responsibility to write a budget on the assumption that I-695 will be upheld.

We reached agreement on legislation to maintain the successful Timber Retraining Benefits program — and to prevent a scheduled increase in unemployment-insurance taxes on businesses.

Beyond the budget and retraining, other issues that have commanded our attention in this legislative session include:

- **Public ports.** We endorsed legislation to send a boost to Washington ports, very much including the Southwest Washington ports of Ilwaco, Wahkiakum No. 1 and No. 2, Grays Harbor, Willapa Harbor, Peninsula, and Longview.
- **Good gov't.** In the wake of Initiative 695, it's more important than ever that we emphasize efficiency and cost-effectiveness in all levels of government.
- **Voc-ed.** Future Farmers of America, Distributive Education Clubs of America, and other programs that help students prepare for success in the working world got a boost in another measure this session.

Thank you so much for your time and interest. **Please feel very free to get in touch with us whenever something comes up that you want to bring to our attention.**

Best wishes,

Brian Hatfield
State Representative
19th Legislative District

Mark Doumit
State Representative
19th Legislative District

Budget: Balance emphasized in setting our state's priorities

You have to set some priorities when you go to the grocery store. With only so much money in your wallet or purse or checking account or whatever, you make decisions like: Do I bring home that gallon of ice cream, or do I first make sure I have enough bread or potatoes or something else to eat before dessert?

There's no ice cream in the House budget proposal. In what you might call the "Initiative 695 Era," it's more important than ever to find a balance in deciding where the taxpayers' dollars should be directed.

We must endeavor to implement the terms of the initiative without putting inappropriate pressure on citizens and communities — and without cutting into our responsibilities toward education, toward other essential services such as public health and safety, and toward important transportation commitments.

Specifically, the education money in the House budget keys on early-childhood instruction and extended learning opportunities. More state money is invested for school construction so our local school districts can keep up with building demands.

Since it's true that the initiative is taking \$750 million a year out of the state treasury, we would use emergency-reserve money to maintain our commitment to students and their families.



Public-health funding is another area in which we must keep a decent balance. **We can't just let local public-safety programs — police and fire departments, for example — collapse without adequate money.** Local communities faced dire consequences without additional dollars to replace revenue erased by the initiative.

We have also searched to find a balance in the transportation portion of the budget. In the overall scheme of transportation things, we focus on key construction projects, freight mobility, transit projects, and the ferry system.

A strong economy allowed us to respond relatively well to the loss of revenue from Initiative 695. Still, we have significantly scaled back some programs and services. **And if the economy goes sour, we will be looking at serious trouble.**

Retraining: Finding agreement (at last!) on program for idled workers

The first major bill approved and signed into law this year breathed new life into the state's successful Timber Retraining Benefits (TRB) program.

Last year, you'll recall, we left Olympia without agreement on a way to continue the program — a situation that left hundreds of out-of-work Washingtonians dangling without the essential assistance that TRB provides. This retraining program is a lifeline for men and women whose careers have been in industries — forest and fisheries, for instance — that are facing hard economic times.

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And here's the icing: **It's a cliché, but it's nevertheless true that this legislation is a real win-win.**

That's because the unemployment-insurance taxes that fund, among other things, the TRB program had been scheduled to go up for businesses. We knew there was no reason to let that happen because the system's trust fund is extremely healthy.

The legislation endorsed this session kills the tax hikes and restores hope for Southwest Washington families and other citizens who are doing the best they know how to get back and stay on their feet.

Public ports: Help made available so employees keep up

It's imperative that training and education programs be more available for staff in the smaller ports which don't always have the resources needed to make the training

available. That's the goal of a new law we endorsed this session. We've got to remember that smaller ports face the same responsibilities as other ports.

We need to improve communications between the ports, and make sure smaller ones get the same opportunities to do a good job as the others.

Terms of the legislation direct that the Washington Public Ports Association will establish a nonprofit organization to provide scholarships for port staff to participate in education and training programs. The nonprofit organization can then seek private contributions to build the scholarship fund. Ports could also contribute money to the nonprofit corporation from their industrial-development bonds.

Scholarships for port employees will be based on financial need, and on the potential benefits for the community in which the applicant's port is located.

Good gov't.: Getting cost-effective use of all taxpayer dollars

No less than the state or any other level of government, local governments should get the most bang for every taxpayer dollar. We passed legislation toward that very end — a measure setting up a task force to look at funding of local-government services.

Local governments need this forum to discuss better, more cost-effective ways of providing essential services. Citizens have a right to these services. And just as surely, citizens have an equal right to see their tax dollars invested effectively.

State agencies will examine the financial impact on local governments of any proposed new state rule. The bill further directs state agencies to keep to a minimum the cost of new rules. These agencies should also make sure all parties that would be impacted by a new rule have a chance to participate in the process before the proposal becomes state policy.

Initiative 695 is presenting a lot of challenges — not just to state government, but to local governments, too. The way state policies are made shouldn't stay the same just because someone says, "That's the way we've always done it."



The legislation was endorsed by associations representing city and county governments, as well as prosecuting attorneys.

Telecommunications: Rural areas get boost in development, diversification

Basic telephone and Internet services could be expanded to include access for the entire state, according to terms of another measure that cleared the Legislature this year.

Right now, the lack of telecommunications capacity is a serious problem for local economic development and diversification. High-speed access and inadequate bandwidth stunt the potential of public utility districts (PUDs) and ports in rural and small-town areas. This bill gives them a tool to compete for development and diversity they don't have much chance of getting today.



New businesses, you see, simply aren't interested in locating in regions where the telecommunications infrastructure isn't sufficient.

The bill will allow PUDs and ports to sell telecommunications services by using capacity on their existing fiber-optic equipment. The legislation is specifically

aimed at areas that are either underserved or completely without service.

Some rural classrooms have no interconnection with other classrooms. That's unacceptable. We must keep our classrooms wired so children are fully prepared for careers of tomorrow. This is a big step toward meeting the goals of our K-20 education emphasis. And we will also go a long way toward connecting community colleges to the four-year colleges and universities.

Finally, the legislation responds to Initiative 695 by encouraging cost-effectiveness on the part of local governments.

Voc-ed: Legislation is OK'd to help students get real-world taste

We can't imagine a school in which student organizations such as the Future Farmers of America, the Distributive Education Clubs of America, the Future Business Leaders of America, the Technical Students Association, the Skills USA organization, and so many other groups aren't playing a key role in the lives of young people. The student organizations have chapters in schools all over Washington and other states.

It's imperative that we do all we can to support that work. Along these very lines, the Legislature passed a bill directing the state school superintendent to provide a trained coordinator for career and technical student organizations in the school districts.

Student representatives from these organizations testified for the legislation in committee.

School districts need the trained coordinator because students must have practical instruction and experience so they can succeed later in life on the job or in business.

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Student organizations from schools and regions participate in competitions and other professional-development activities to improve their skills. The coordinator will work with local schools to help arrange competitions and other activities.

The legislation reflects our responsibility for providing all students the knowledge and skills needed to be a contributing member of society.

Students in the organizations learn the value of work — whether it's working for someone else or starting up and maintaining their own business.

Student organizations are also an important way for students to see the real world and develop leadership skills. **Student groups arm young people with an opportunity to sharpen their abilities in areas in which they might well be making their career.**

Shorelines: Unfinished work remains as agreement proves elusive



Spurred by members of the House Democratic Caucus, the Legislature considered a bill aimed at improving the organization of the shoreline-guide-

line process — and at putting it more in line with our state's salmon-recovery efforts.

Lawmakers recognize that communities — and our state as a whole — face substantial responsibilities in answering salmon-recovery challenges in the federal Endangered Species Act. Unfortunately, the measure didn't win approval this year.

Several salmon runs in the Evergreen State are protected by the federal law. This means that Washington policymakers at the local, regional and state levels must either come up with plans to rescue the fish or face losing control to the federal government.

It's also been pointed out that we shouldn't put new guidelines in place until we get word from the federal government that the guidelines are acceptable under terms of the Endangered Species Act.

The legislation we considered would establish a task force to review shoreline-planning, regulation and protection. Further, the Department of Ecology would be required to put together a work group — with representation from affected public agencies and interest groups — to review policy issues related to the Shoreline Management Act.

Our House Democratic proposal would have delayed the department's rules until after the review process was set up.

The importance of the task force we want to set up is that it would be charged with investigating the issue thoroughly — and producing reasoned, practical recommendations for doing the right, common-sense thing.

We do not support the unreasonable environmental agendas advanced in certain state and federal agencies!

But there's no denying the fact that we would probably lose a war with the federal government.

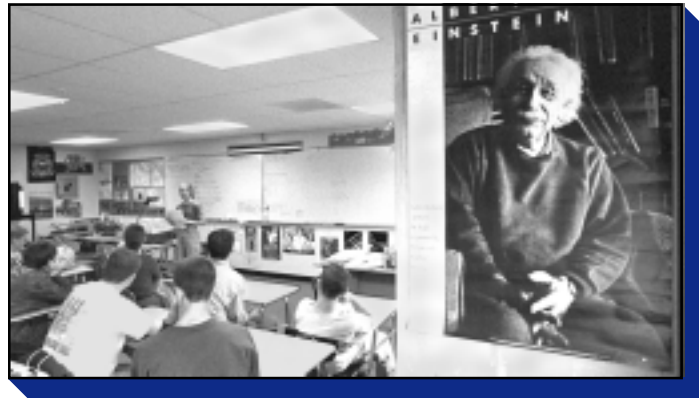
That makes it important to find a compromise in our salmon-recovery and shoreline-protection efforts — a compromise that farmers, builders, local governments, and other citizens can live with.

College: Deserving young people shouldn't be denied chance

Parents of college-age young people know all too well that college costs often go up every year faster than inflation. **If you're the parent of a young person who wants to go to college (or if you are that young person yourself), you know that having financial help can make a lot of difference.**

Have you heard about the "Dollars for Scholars" program? It's a national program that has more than 50 volunteer-based local chapters in the state of Washington.

What's the "mission" of the organization? We're glad you asked. They: "Help local people raise local scholarship money for their own students." Washington chapters have raised more than \$5.2 million to distribute to worthy students.



Last year, the Legislature recognized the positive effects these local fund-raisers are having — and we provided an incentive to expand this good work.

A \$500,000 appropriation was secured for the Community Scholarship Matching Grant Program. This will expand from 50 to 250 the number of \$2,000 matching grants available to communities that raise local funds to send their high school graduates on to college.

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